THE CHANGES IN TALIBAN BEHAVIOR AS A RESULT OF CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL AND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS CAUSED BY US INTERVENTIONS

by
Jack A. Webb II

A research study submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Global Security Studies

Baltimore, Maryland
August, 2021

© 2021 Jack Webb II
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Many US activities in and around Afghanistan changed the Taliban's environment and structure, leading to a convergence of terrorist, insurgent, and criminal behavior. To grasp the problem in Afghanistan, one must assess and accept specific US actions that aided the Taliban's growth as a disruptive non-state actor authority. The existing literature on non-state actors lacks analysis or connection to the consequences of US intervention and changes in environmental and structural conditions, which result in the establishment of nexuses between hostile non-state actors. Changes in environmental and structural factors induced by US operations in the region will be traced using a causality case study methodology. The data describes US actions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, and the Taliban's responses. The data analysis categorizes the data into US regional security responses to 9/11, approaches to the Afghan narcotics trade, nation-building assumptions, and management COIN.

Since 9/11, US activities in South Asia and the Middle East have resulted in significant changes to regional conditions, disrupting nefarious non-state actor threats to national security in the short term. However, the long-term consequences of US-induced regional shifts have exacerbated the core problems that fueled Islamist group support and allowed the formation of nexuses between disruptive non-state actors. The data reveals commonalities in US interventions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran, resulting in changes in Taliban behavior compared to pre-2001 Taliban behavior. Each adjustment in US regional behavior resulted in a shift in conditions, leading the Taliban to adapt, connect, converge, and morph to survive and thrive. Conversely, the US has been slow to adopt initiatives aimed at preventing the Taliban's survival.

Primary Reader and Advisor: Sarah Clark

Secondary Reader: Oliver Fritz

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my wife, Habiba Webb, for her moral support and understanding of the time and dedication required to pursue a graduate degree at Johns Hopkins University. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Joana Cook, Dr. Stephen Grenier, Dr. Katrina Kosec, Dr. Jason Fritz, Dr. Paul Sullivan, Dr. Kimberley Thachuk, Dr. Bryan Gibson, and Dr. Sarah Clark for their insightful feedback and efforts to the structure and delivery of their JHU class. Learning from such experts, intellectuals, and scholars was an honor and an enriching experience.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

After 20 years of involvement, the United States (US) has rapidly withdrawn from Afghanistan, while the Taliban has demonstrated fierce momentum in seizing control of large sections of the state. Afghanistan's future is bleak, and the potential threat to global security posed by a country controlled by a revitalized Taliban is troubling. After successfully ousting the Taliban from power and denying Afghanistan as a sanctuary for terrorist organizations in 2001, the US-led coalition has failed to promote a competent Afghan government and security forces to uphold stability and security. In contrast, the Taliban has converged and transformed to survive and thrive by exploiting changing environmental and structural conditions by adopting criminality, insurrection, and terrorism behaviors. How have US interventions since 9/11 influenced the environmental and structural conditions that resulted in the Taliban's behavioral changes? It is necessary to assess and acknowledge key US activities that facilitated the Taliban's development to greater prominence as a disruptive non-state actor authority in order to comprehend how the US arrived at the position of withdrawing forces in the face of a stronger Taliban.

Throughout the research study, key terminology refers to various phenomena necessary for determining and analyzing the effects of US behavior on observable changes in Taliban behavior since 9/11. The critical terms are 'environmental and structural conditions,' or the abbreviated 'conditions,' 'nexus formation,' and 'in and around Afghanistan.' Environmental refers to conditions that influence the Taliban's behavior and development. Structural refers to the way something is constructed or organized. Conditions are the physical circumstances that influence how something occurs and the circumstances under which people live, work, and perform tasks. Environmental and structural conditions are used throughout the research to refer to the political,

economic, sociological, and military dimensions affected by US regional interventions that have impacted the Taliban directly or indirectly. The political, economic, sociological, and military dimensions encompass but are not limited to fundamental human needs, poverty, government capacity, globalization, criminality, intervention, military strategy, and foreign state interests. Nexuses refer to the blurring of traditional characteristics as a result of convergence between the Taliban and other nefarious non-state actors such as criminals, terrorists, and insurgents, as well as instances of the Taliban transforming into an insurgency criminal enterprise employing terror as a tactic. The term in and around Afghanistan refers to Afghanistan and adjacent states such as Pakistan and Iran, and Iraq, which became a significant focus of the US Global War on Terrorism shortly after the October 7, 2001, invasion of Afghanistan.

The parameters of what defines an insurgency, terrorism, and transnational organized crime must be defined to identify the Taliban's changes in behavior in response to changing environmental and structural conditions caused by US interventions to answer the research question. The CIA defines insurgency as a protracted political-military conflict aimed at undermining or overthrowing the legitimacy of an occupying power or constituted authority and gaining full or partial control of a territory's resources via the utilization of unconventional combat forces and illegitimate political groups.[1] In comparison, terrorism, according to the US Title 22, is "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."[2] By contrast, as defined by the FBI,

[1] CIA, "*Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*," Homeland Security Digital Library (United States. Central Intelligence Agency, January 1, 2012), https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=713599.
[2] "United States Code, 2011 Edition Title 22 - Foreign Relations and Intercourse" (US Government Publishing Office, 2011), www.gpo.gov.

transnational organized crime is multinational organizations that operate illegally to gain financial power and influence while hiding their activities using corruption and violence.[3]

Literature Review

Scholars and policymakers have agreed on specific characteristics of disruptive non-state actors that allow them to distinguish between insurgents, terrorists, and criminals. Conventional wisdom claims insurgents employ protracted violence to overturn a political system or implement a radical local and territorial change.[4] By contrast, terrorists target non-combatants and symbolic infrastructure to draw national and worldwide attention to an ongoing campaign of indiscriminate violence aimed at fundamental ideological or political transnational change.[5] Conversely, criminals use varying degrees of corruption and violence to maintain control over illicit flows of goods and services to protect their interests and maximize profit.[6] Several researchers have recognized the distorting of these disruptive non-state actors' features as an emerging threat to national and international security.

Hammes emphasizes that warfare has evolved into the fourth generation of warfare (4GW), characterized by "international, transnational, national, and subnational networks" of actors who shift "alliances, interests, and positions" in response to diverse political, economic, sociologic, and military dimensions.[7] Hammes' claim of 4GW is significant because it identifies a paradigm shift in the nature of global security threats posed by disruptive non-state actors, where diverse circumstances are causing a blurring of traditional characteristics used by scholars

[3] "Organized Crime" FBI, last modified May 3, 2016, https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/organized-crime.
[4] Steven Metz, "*The Future of Insurgency*," December 10, 1993, 1.
[5] Chris Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (2001): 45.
[6] Robert Mandel, "Links Between Transnational Criminals and Terrorists," in *Dark Logic: Transnational Criminal Tactics and Global Security* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 147.
[7] Thomas X. Hammes, "Characteristics of Fourth-Generation War," in *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006), 210-211.

and policymakers to differentiate between nefarious non-state actors. Furthermore, Oehme contends that traditional distinctions between terrorists, insurgents, and organized criminal groups are no longer relevant for identifying or analyzing the security environment of states.[8] Correspondingly, Robb warns that identifying our adversaries will become increasingly tricky as groups and their attacks become smaller and more frequent.[9] In conclusion, Metz, Dishman, and Mandel illustrate how assumptions about what constitutes an insurgent, terrorist, or criminal add to a long-standing notion that disruptive non-state actors possess distinct characteristics that aid in detecting differences and similarities. On the contrary, Hammes, Oehme, and Robb claim that this long-held notion has become increasingly irrelevant to scholars and policymakers as the nature of warfare has evolved, making it more difficult to distinguish and identify adversaries.

Orientation, Motives, and Methods

According to conventional wisdom, distinct disruptive non-state actors convey a fundamental orientation that defines their motivations and directs their means of accomplishing their goals. Consequently, Dishman argues that the motivations of terrorists or criminals dictate how they use violence to accomplish political or economic goals.[10] While Dishman is correct that motives influence how non-state actors use violence, as Rosenthal notes, terrorist organizations disseminate misinformation about their supporters and opponents' motivations to recruit new members and mislead state counterstrategies.[11] For instance, Hammes underlines that insurgents communicate one message to their supporters, another to the majority of the

[8] Chester G. Oehme, "Terrorists, Insurgents, and Criminals—Growing Nexus?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 1 (April 2008): 82.
[9] John Robb, "Guerrilla Entrepreneurs," in *Brave New War: the next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008), 137.
[10] Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," 45.
[11] Justine A. Rosenthal, "For-Profit Terrorism: The Rise of Armed Entrepreneurs," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 492.

ambivalent population, and a third to their rivals' decision-makers.[12] Although motivations determine disruptive non-state actors' methods, it does not always imply that their motivations correspond to their perceived fundamental orientation.

As such, the drug market serves as a principal source of funding for malicious non-state actors, frequently distorting the conventional view of the relationship between fundamental orientation, primary motivation, and a means to an end. Hence, Sanderson asserts that large money streams from the narcotics market have prompted many terrorist groups to justify their criminal acts by highlighting their organization's financial requirements and the significance of narcotics in eroding Western civilization.[13] Correspondingly, Dishman claims that many insurgent groups have grown so entangled in organized crime that their leaders' motivations are questionable, and their methods have transformed to the point where their fundamental orientation is no longer clear.[14]

However, Makarenko's theoretic framework of the "crime-terror continuum" suggests that distortion of orientation, objectives, and techniques is a sort of convergence dubbed "black hole syndrome," in which a non-state actor's political goals morph into criminal goals or vice versa (*figure 1*).[15] More importantly, as Dishman argues, decision-makers must be cognizant of the so-called shifting of motives and disinformation campaigns because profit-driven disruptive non-state actors will never seek a diplomatic resolution, preferring to preserve the conflict that generates their wealth.[16] Consequently, Makarenko's theory and Dishman's warning to policymakers bolster Oehme's argument that focusing exclusively on motives or methods when

---

[12] Hammes, "Characteristics of Fourth-Generation War," 209.
[13] Thomas Sanderson, "Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2004): 52.
[14] Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," 49.
[15] Tamara Makarenko, "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism," *Global Crime* 6, no. 1 (February 2004): 138.
[16] Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," 52.

analyzing disruptive non-state actors is erroneous, and examining environmental and structural conditions is a more practical approach.[17]

FIGURE 1: The Crime Terror Continuum

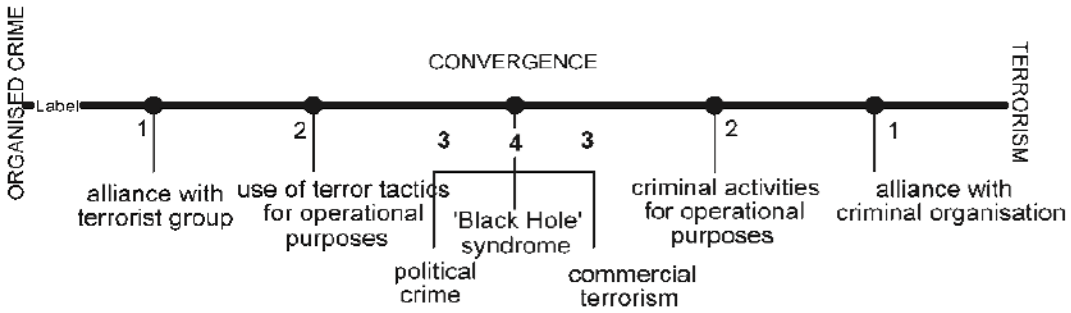


Figure 1 examines the process of convergence between transnational organized crime and terrorism.[18]

Environmental and Structural Conditions

Recognizing how disruptive non-state actors adapt, interact, converge, and operate across international, transnational, national, and subnational systems involves analyzing environmental and structural conditions. Metz argues that an international environment in which underdeveloped states should provide for their citizens' basic human needs but cannot do so creates the conditions for political opposition.[19] Consequently, Rosenthal underlines that chronic poverty and lax government control allow for the corruption of citizens by malevolent non-state actors.[20] On the contrary, Robb infers that economic integration and technology advancement are the fundamental conditions underpinning the drastic transformation of how politically motivated disruptive non-state actors evolve, cooperate, and operate on a global scale.[21] Metz attributes the development of conditions favorable to disruptive non-state actors to post-Cold War environmental pressures resulting from the emergence of a unipolar hegemony. At the same

[17] Oehme, "Terrorists, Insurgents, and Criminals—Growing Nexus?" 82.
[18] Makarenko, "The Crime-Terror Continuum," 131.
[19] Metz, "The Future of Insurgency," 4.
[20] Rosenthal, "For-Profit Terrorism," 487.
[21] Robb, "Guerrilla Entrepreneurs," 144.

time, Rosenthal recognizes the critical role of such related conditions in facilitating nefarious non-state actors. Conversely, Robb asserts that globalization facilitates the environmental and structural conditions that allow disruptive non-state actors to flourish.

Scholars documented environmental and structural conditions that facilitate and impact the conduct of nefarious non-state actors provide a matrix of nexuses connecting insurgents, terrorists, and criminals. Makarenko emphasizes how globalization has aided in forming a crime-terror nexus in which non-state entities acting under the auspice of transnational organized crime and terrorism are aggressively endangering state security.[22] On the other hand, Rosenthal alludes to an established insurgency-terror nexus fostered by government vacuums that provided fertile ground for profiteering terrorism, resulting in the distortion of insurgency ideology through the appeal of illicit profits.[23] Additionally, Sullivan and Bunker establish a link between criminality and insurgency due to "criminal enterprises competing with the state."[24] Sullivan and Bunker develop a crime-insurgency nexus, whereas Makarenko highlights how globalization has facilitated a crime-terror nexus, and Rosenthal alludes to an insurgency-terror nexus created by government vacuums. However, Mandel's research shows a developing insurgent-terrorist-criminal nexus fostered by changing vulnerabilities and counterpressure while asserting that unique patterns endure among the disruptive non-state actors.[25]

Debates on the Formation of Nexuses

Debates on a nexus between malevolent non-state actors have centered on the blurring of distinctions between these entities. Some claim that these actors are converging, while others

[22] Makarenko, "The Crime-Terror Continuum," 141.
[23] Rosenthal, "For-Profit Terrorism," 482.
[24] John Sullivan and Robert Bunker, "Rethinking Insurgency: Criminality, Spirituality, and Societal Warfare in the Americas," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 5 (November 28, 2011): 745.
[25] Mandel, "Links Between Transnational Criminals and Terrorists," 146.

claim that they are transforming. Makarenko, for example, demonstrates a convergence thesis composed of two distinct but connected components: (1) criminal groups with apparent political motivations and (2) terrorist groups equally engaged in criminal earnings and cloaked in political rhetoric.[26] Additionally, Makarenko contends that the convergence of motives, structures, and operations has made it extremely difficult to distinguish criminal and terrorist groups conceptually.[27] Conversely, Mandel notes that the ease with which violent non-state groups can transform into other types of groups has resulted in a blurring of their boundaries, making it difficult to discern each disruptive group.[28]

Continuing the debate, Oehme underscores the necessity of recognizing the convergence of criminals, insurgents, and terrorists and the threat to global security posed by an expanding nexus.[29] On the other hand, Dishman emphasizes the significance of being aware of political motives and objectives, noting that transformation alters how guerrillas and terrorists function when their means focus on profit-driven illicit enterprises.[30] Furthermore, Rosenthal identifies three significant factors that contribute to the phenomenon of nefarious non-state actors transforming from political to financial motivations: (1) leadership disintegration; (2) political changes that undermine the group's ideology; and (3) opportunities for financial gain that overshadow their ideological motivations.[31] Both sides give pertinent theories and data about the convergence and transformation of the orientation, motivation, and activities of various non-state actors.

Naturally, another subset of experts acknowledges that disruptive non-state actors have

---

[26] Makarenko, "The Crime-Terror Continuum," 135.
[27] *Ibid*., 135.
[28] Mandel, "Links Between Transnational Criminals and Terrorists," 149.
[29] Oehme, "Terrorists, Insurgents, and Criminals—Growing Nexus?" 81.
[30] Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," 47, 56.
[31] Rosenthal, "For-Profit Terrorism," 482.

converged and transformed to varying degrees. Shelly and Picarelli acknowledge that transformation occurs in a few situations where a group becomes so engaged in one activity that the group abandons the other, but they emphasize that most terror-crime ties seldom progress into a complete convergence.[32] Shelly and Picarelli claim that transformation and convergence occur, but these are rare occurrences, and transformation is more likely than convergence. Sanders, likewise, recognizes the value of convergence and transformation and asserts that one thing is sure: the "growing threat is complex and increasingly difficult to counter."[33] While scholars such as Makarenko and Oehme argue for the existence of a convergence phenomenon, Mandel, Dishman, and Rosenthal contend that non-state actors do not converge but rather transform to survive. By accepting both phenomena, Shelly, Picarelli, and Sanders more accurately assess the security threat posed by the growing nexus of disruptive non-state actors.

Bunker provides a comprehensive framework for identifying violent non-state groups, underlining policy implications, and suggesting a direction for the US responses by carefully examining the nature of past and future insurgencies. Although Bunker does not state it explicitly, he appears to maintain that insurgencies in various forms continue to constitute a substantial threat to national security. On the other hand, Bunker logically highlights that terrorism can result in insurgency and that an insurgency can use terrorism as a tactic, thereby presenting a more realistic nexus between insurgency and terrorism.[34]

The Effects of US Intervention on Conditions

The scholarly literature has produced valuable insights, judgments, and forecasts critical to conceptualizing environmental and structural conditions that facilitate the convergence and

[32] Louise Shelley and John Picarelli, "Methods and Motives: Exploring Links between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism," *Trends in Organized Crime* 9, no. 2 (2005): 54.
[33] Sanderson, "Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines," 49.
[34] Robert Bunker, "*Old and New Insurgency*," (2016), 6.

transformation of disruptive non-state actors, resulting in overlapping behavioral distinctions. However, there is insufficient analysis of or connection to the impacts of US intervention and changes in environmental and structural conditions that result in the formation of nexuses and the blurring of lines between malicious non-state actors. Specifically, the current literature pays limited attention to the relationship between non-state actor behavior changes and regional changes in conditions caused by specific US behaviors. For example, Shelley critiques the US war on terrorism for failing to address points of convergence between traditional differences between criminals and terrorists without identifying how specific US security responses to 9/11 have contributed to convergence.[35] Furthermore, Shelley claims that in a globalized world, regulatory inconsistencies enable criminals and terrorists to use the lack of consistency but no connection to how US nation-building assumptions have allowed state regulatory inconsistencies to be exploited by malicious groups.[36]

Along the same lines, Thachuk argues that the primary impetus for the transformation of these nefarious groups was anti-money laundering initiatives paired with a decline in financial and moral support from state sponsors and communities, vaguely linking changes to US regional narcotics approaches.[37] By contrast, Lea and Stenson emphasize the existence of covert and overt linkages between states and violent non-state actors, in which states sustain groups as foreign policy agents.[38] Lea and Stenson correctly identify a phenomenon linked to violent non-state groups in the twenty-first century but overlook the role of US behaviors in motivating the establishment of links between state and malicious non-state actors. While the reviewed

---

[35] Louise Shelley, "The Nexus of Organized International Criminals and Terrorism," *International Annals of Criminology* 40, no. 1 (2002): 91.
[36] *Ibid*., 91
[37] Kimberley Thachuk, "The Gangsterization of Terrorism," in *Terrorist Criminal Enterprises: Financing Terrorism through Organized Crime* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2018), 12-13.
[38] John Lea and Kevin Stenson, "Security, Sovereignty, and Non-State Governance 'From Below,'" *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 22, no. 2 (2007): 24.

literature provides insightful frameworks for analyzing and responding to the nexus of disruptive non-state actors, it falls short of explaining how specific US regional interventions in the twenty-first century have caused changes in environmental and structural conditions that facilitated the transformation of the nature and essence of non-state actors, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Hypothesis

Following September 11, 2001, several US interventions in and around Afghanistan altered the Taliban's environmental and structural conditions, resulting in a conflation of insurgent, terrorist, and criminal behavior. To avert future attacks, the US had concentrated on interventions to deny terrorists' havens, support, and access to weapons of mass destruction. Over the last two decades, the US's national security responses, narcotics policies, nation-building assumptions, and counterinsurgency and counterterrorism activities in South Asia and the Middle East have facilitated the blurring of distinctions between various disruptive non-state actors. Owing to changing environmental and structural conditions, the Taliban have adapted, interacted, converged, and operated as insurgents, terrorists, and organized criminals with the covert and overt support of state and non-state actors, which would not have occurred in the absence of specific US behavior in and around Afghanistan since 9/11.

Method

A causation case study methodology will guide a mixed method of process tracing to identify discrete parts in the process of changes in the pre-2001 Taliban behavior caused by changing conditions due to US interventions in the region. The process-tracing method set the parameters for collecting and analyzing data, identifying parts of the causal mechanism between the independent and dependent variables, and testing the hypothesis. Evidence came from policy research institutions, media websites, and academic and governmental databases. Evaluating

each source's limits, prejudices, alternative events, and hypotheses occurred throughout the research process to reduce bias in the data. The evidence collected spanned from 1990 to 2017 to understand the Taliban's behavior before 2001, US regional behaviors, changing regional conditions, and changes in the Taliban's behavior after 2001. The data description spans case studies on US behaviors in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran to examine the process of changing conditions and the Taliban's subsequent decisions. By categorizing the data analysis into US regional security responses to 9/11, approaches to the Afghan narcotics trade, nation-building assumptions, and the management of COIN, the analysis captures discrete stages in changing conditions that resulted in changes in the Taliban behaviors.

The independent variable is US interventions in the region, and the dependent variable is changing Taliban behaviors after 2001. US interventions in the region defined specific US behaviors in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran that caused changes in environmental and structural conditions that facilitated the forming of state and non-state connections. Changes in Taliban behavior are defined as overlapping characteristics of insurgency, terrorism, and organized crime that would not have occurred without specific conditions created by US regional behavior after 9/11.

A combination of causal reasoning process tracing tests will examine each part to determine causality. If the hypothesis is correct, the data discussion and analysis will reveal a clear cause-effect relationship between US behavior that resulted in environmental and structural changes that caused observable changes in the Taliban's behavior. If the proposed hypothesis is incorrect, the data discussion and analysis will show no or an unclear causal relationship between changes in US behavior that resulted in environmental and structural changes that caused observed changes in Taliban behavior.

Data Discussion

The Taliban, a group of religious students led by Mullah Mohammed Omar, rose to prominence in the 1990s by protecting rural Afghans from corrupt warlords and Mujahideen commanders.[39] Throughout the 1990s, the Taliban, assisted on both an official and covert basis by Pakistan and bolstered by an integrated multinational force composed chiefly of Afghans, fought exclusively against Afghan militias.[40] From 1994 to 1996, the Taliban evolved from an armed party contesting various former Mujahideen leaders and their armed units to a solid militant organization fighting against the Islamic State of Afghanistan, which organized in the aftermath of the communist government's collapse.[41] In 1994, the Taliban attempted to prohibit opium production as un-Islamic, but due to widespread opposition in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, the Taliban yielded and began to tolerate, sponsor, and tax.[42] Between 1996 and 2001, the Taliban established an Islamic emirate across most of Afghanistan, fighting off the strongholds of Mujahideen remnants.[43] During the 1990s, the Taliban aggressively repressed criminal activity in Afghanistan, but following their removal in 2001, the group turned to these illicit enterprises to fund the Taliban's political-military struggle.[44] Before 2001, the Taliban in Afghanistan did not use suicide bombings as a tactic.[45]

---

[39] Colin Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," in *Terrorism, Inc: the Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2015), 113.
[40] Michael Semple, "Rhetoric, Ideology, and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement," vol. 102 (Washington, DC: the United States Institute of Peace, 2014), 6.
[41] Semple, "Rhetoric, Ideology, and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement," 6.
[42] Vanda Felbab-Brown, Harold Trinkunas, and Shadi Hamid, "Second Wind: Taliban Coercion and Governance in Afghanistan," in *Militants, Criminals and Warlords the Challenge of Local Governance in an Age of Disorder* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 36.
[43] *Ibid*., 6.
[44] Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 117.
[45] Thomas Johnson, "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 1 (2013): 11; Alec Barker, "Improvised Explosive Devices in Southern Afghanistan and Western Pakistan, 2002–2009," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 8 (2011): 609.

Afghanistan

Following 9/11, Afghanistan became the focal point of the US effort to disrupt and destroy terrorists and factions that supported terrorists, resulting in the US invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Al Qaeda (AQ) hoped to elicit a military reaction from the US and rally Muslims worldwide to fight the Westerners in Afghanistan by attacking the US.[46] President Bush stated that the US strategic objective in Afghanistan was to eliminate the Taliban and AQ.[47] The US campaign in Afghanistan to topple the Taliban and destroy AQs stronghold appeared successful. However, the leadership of both groups remained intact and sought sanctuary to rebuild. Furthermore, AQs financial network remained quite functional at first, allowing the group to subsidize the Taliban leadership in exile.

The Bush administration's financial initiatives included tightening the enforcement of Executive Order 13129 (1999), which prohibits all property and transactions with the Taliban, and issuing Executive Order 13224 (2001), which empowers the US to target terrorists organizations financial infrastructure.[48] The US financial initiatives relied on the cooperation of other sovereign states, resulting in slow adoption and ineffective enforcement by states in South Asia and the Middle East, leaving gaps in the regional and international financial systems for AQ and the Taliban to exploit.[49] The shadow economy expanded significantly in Afghanistan and Pakistan, permitting the growth of illicit commerce among disruptive non-state entities.[50] As the US increased financial pressure on both groups, the Taliban began to engage in criminal activity,

[46] Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 50; Trita Parsi, "Khatami's Détente," in *Treacherous Alliance: the Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), Kindle 3112-3113.
[47] Stephen Grenier, "United States: Examining America's Longest War," in *Coalition Challenges in Afghanistan: the Politics of Alliance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 48.
[48] Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 131.
[49] *Ibid*., 132.
[50] *Ibid.,* 114.

such as racketeering, kidnapping, and smuggling to support efforts to reassemble to combat the interim Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) and the US-led coalition.[51] While the US launched a global campaign to counterterrorism, the Bush administration ignored America's commitment to Afghanistan stabilization.

After achieving the main objective in Afghanistan, the Bush administration shifted focus to nation-building, despite the lack of a clear strategy or the resources needed to implement an approach to nation-building. [52] The US strategic objectives became opaque, and senior leaders' public pronouncements frequently contradicted directives to military commanders.[53] The US changed attention to other perceived threats before providing clear direction and investing enough resources to ensure Afghanistan's security and stability. The US haphazard approach to nation-building resulted in a corrupt Afghan administration that increasingly disenfranchised the Afghan population, notably the Pashtun, resulting in the development of networks of support via compulsion or dedication to the Taliban agenda. [54] As early as 2003, the Taliban began to construct a shadow government in Afghanistan; by 2010, the Taliban had 33 province governors and around 180 district governors (*Figure 3)*.[55]

Due to a lack of US commitment and a clear strategy for nation-building, Afghanistan lacked effective state mechanisms to prevent the narcotics trade and illicit economy from flourishing. Given that the initial US partner force had multiple warlords linked to the Afghan opium trade, increasing opium cultivation was empowered. The US recognized that if the US interfered with Afghanistan's illicit narcotics trade, the US would not obtain intelligence or

[51] *Ibid*., 120.
[52] Grenier, "United States: Examining America's Longest War," 50.
[53] *Ibid*., 48.
[54] Felbab-Brown, Trinkunas, and Hamid, "Second Wind: Taliban Coercion and Governance in Afghanistan," 33.
[55] Johnson, "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations," 9.

support from local militias to fight the Taliban and AQ.[56] Afghanistan's terrain grew fractured and unstable due to the absence of national procedures to regulate poppy production, facilitating linkages between the Taliban and sophisticated criminal networks.[57]

In 2004, as officials realized that expanding opium cultivation posed a threat to US objectives in Afghanistan, the US devoted resources to opium eradication operations. (*Figure 2*).[58] Simultaneously, the Taliban integrated into the opium trade, carried out diversionary attacks for narcotics traffickers, protected opium fields, and gained the support of criminal groups and Afghan opium farmers.[59] The US policy of eradicating opium fields generated demand for the Taliban to secure trafficking operations and opium harvests, allowing the Taliban's role and earnings in the illicit drug market to grow and driving local farmers to support the Taliban as the US-led coalition targeted the link between narcotics and the insurgency through eradication operations. The Taliban positioned the group as a protector of Afghan livelihoods, presenting coalition forces as an occupier intent on destroying Afghanistan's most lucrative sector.[60] Eradication initiatives supported the Taliban's mobilization by strengthening their support base among the local populace in eastern and southern Afghanistan and enabling the group to profit through integration into the drug trade.[61]

The violence in Afghanistan continued to escalate in the run-up to and following the Taliban's 2006 resurgence into southern and eastern provinces (*Figure 3*), owing in part to

---

[56] Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Counterinsurgency, Counternarcotics, and Illicit Economies in Afghanistan: Lessons for State-Building," in *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2013), 190.
[57] Oehme, "Terrorists, Insurgents, and Criminals—Growing Nexus?" 84.
[58] Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Counterinsurgency, Counternarcotics, and Illicit Economies in Afghanistan," 191.
[59] *Ibid.,*191-192; Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 118.
[60] Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 118.
[61] Gretchen Peters and Don Rassler, "Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan," (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2010), 12; Farhana Schmidt, "From Islamic Warriors to Drug Lords: The Evolution of the Taliban Insurgency," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (January 2010): 72.

growing anger among Pashtun tribes over the Afghan government's harsh policies and coalition forces' indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas.[62] Rising insecurity and instability due to the Taliban's efforts to undermine the GIRoA and the US-led coalition resulted in intensified combat, amplified US aerial attacks on Taliban locations. By 2007, the Taliban had penetrated all aspects of the opium trade, including mobile heroin processing facilities.[63] The Taliban adapted to changing conditions facilitated by US regional actions by integrating into all sectors of the Afghan opium trade and gradually strengthening control as conditions changed to support the Taliban's desire to reclaim Afghanistan.

In 2009, President Obama emphasized the importance of reducing the number of troops on the ground and minimizing the burden of nation-building. Instead, he relied on surgical strikes employing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and special operations forces (SOF).[64] With escalating violence and areas controlled or contested by the Taliban, the Obama administration felt that a surge of US forces would stabilize Afghanistan and allow the GIRoA and Afghanistan's national security forces (ANSF) to take charge in 2014 (*Figure 3*).[65] Obama's early plans for America's involvement in Afghanistan included a surge of 30,000 additional troops on top of the 70,000 authorized by Bush, as well as the eventual withdrawal of US military personnel by 2014 (*figure 4*).[66] In Afghanistan, the counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy

---

[62] Sean Maloney, "A Violent Impediment: The Evolution of Insurgent Operations in Kandahar Province 2003–07," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 2 (2008): 202; Emil Souleimanov and Huseyn Aliyev, "Blood Revenge and Violent Mobilization: Evidence from the Chechen Wars," *International Security* 40, no. 2 (2015): 164.
[63] "Examining the Nexus between Organised Crime and Terrorism and Its Implications for EU Programming," (ICCT, 2017), 16.
[64] Michael Boyle, "The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare," *International Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2013): 2.
[65] Richard Hooker, "A Century Like No Other," in *The Grand Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2014), 21.
[66] Craig Whitlock and Nick Kirkpatrik, "The War in Afghanistan: America's Longest Conflict in Photos," The Washington Post (WP Company, April 14, 2021); Stephen Biddle, "Afghanistan's Legacy: Emerging Lessons of an Ongoing War," *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (March 2014): 83; "National Security Strategy 2010," 7, 21; Ashely Tellis and Jeff Eggers, "US Policy in Afghanistan: Changing Strategies, Preserving Gains," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (May 2017), 7.

compelled the military to differentiate between militants and civilians when targeting insurgents, increasing the threats to the US military personnel.[67] Consequently, the Taliban leadership observed the US shift to population-centric COIN and responded in 2009 by releasing the Taliban's thirteen-chapter Code of Conduct, which directed avoidance of civilian casualties and the destruction of private property.[68] Despite the US and Taliban efforts, the number of civilian deaths in Afghanistan continued to rise due to the fighting. Moreover, the Obama administration ensured that the US strategy in Afghanistan aimed to address the factors contributing to the Taliban's strong connection to the Afghan opium trade.

To fracture the relationship between criminals and the Taliban, the Obama administration shifted American anti-opium activities away from eradication and toward alternative crop and interdiction operations.[69] The Taliban used violence and corruption to fill voids and seize control of illicit markets, as interdiction efforts resulted in the arrest or death of prominent traffickers.[70] The Taliban's ties to transnational drug traffickers had grown more substantial, with the group investing in transportation and import-export enterprises to conceal drug shipments and launder illicit proceeds.[71] The Obama administration's shift in narcotics strategy and recognition of the Taliban's critical link to illicit markets came when the Taliban had already morphed into an insurgency criminal enterprise. As a result, the new measures strengthened the Taliban's ability to adapt to shifting regional conditions brought forth by varying US actions.

---

[67] Lorenzo Zambernardi, "Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2010): 22.
[68] Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 127; [68] Peters and Rassler, "Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan," 11.
[69] *Ibid*., 189; "National Security Strategy 2010," 15, 49.
[70] Peters and Rassler, "Crime and Insurgency," 24.
[71] Schmidt, "From Islamic Warriors to Drug Lords," 63; Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 115.

By the time the US surge peaked at 100,000 troops in 2011, opium cultivation had declined, and the territory controlled by the Taliban decreased in Afghanistan.[72] The US military gradually reduced troops and combat operations, eventually shifting to a train and advise mission by 2014, and Obama decided to retain 8,400 US troops until the end of his term in 2017 rather than reduce them to 5,500 as first stated (*Figure 4*).[73] The Obama administration judged that extending US combat forces in Afghanistan beyond 2014 was necessary due to the ANSFs inability to hold territory against the Taliban.[74] During the US surge in Afghanistan, the Taliban remained politically, militarily, and financially active, and following the surge, the Taliban reclaimed strategically essential areas.[75]

FIGURE 2: Trends in Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan

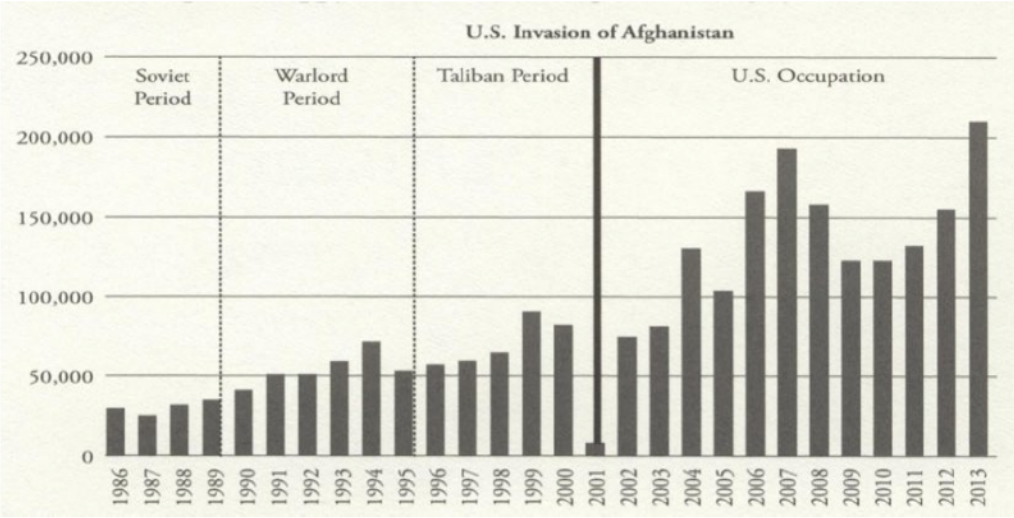


Figure 2 demonstrates the significant changes in opium cultivation during the US occupation.[76]

[72] *Ibid., 117.*
[73] "A Timeline of U.S. Troop Levels in Afghanistan since 2001," *Military Times* (August 8, 2017); Jeff Mason and Jonathan Landay, "Obama, in Shift, Says He Will Keep 8,400 US Troops in Afghanistan until 2017," *Reuters* (July 6, 2016).
[74] Tellis and Eggers, "US Policy in Afghanistan: Changing Strategies, Preserving Gains," 7.
[75] Biddle, "Afghanistan's Legacy," 76.
[76] Coyne, Hall, and Burns "The War on Drugs in Afghanistan," 96.

Figure 3: 2009 Afghanistan Under Taliban Influence

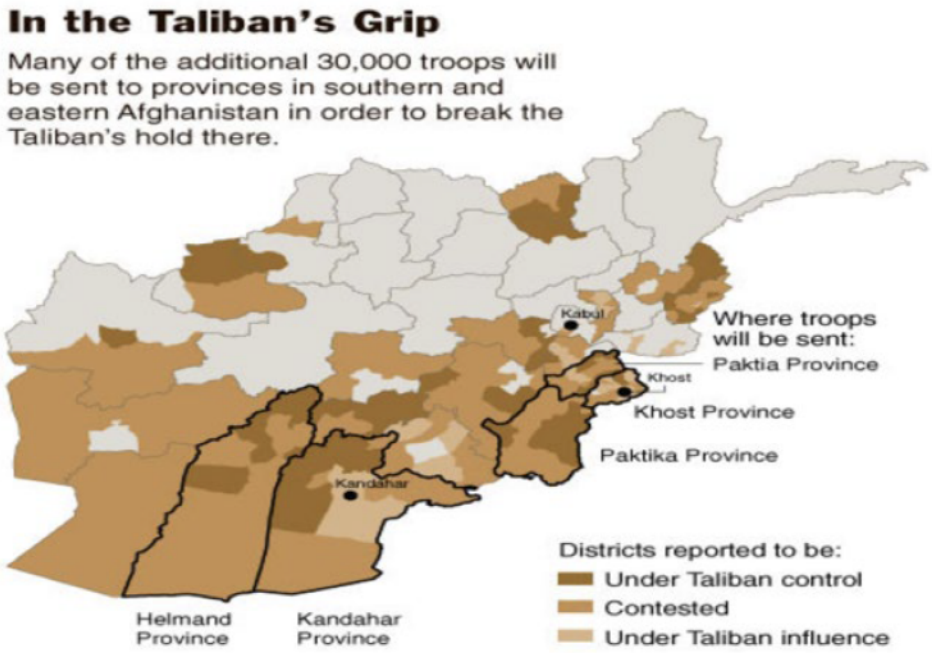


Figure 3 depicts the Taliban's presence in Afghanistan in 2009, before the US surge.[77]

Figure 4: Timeline of US Troops in Afghanistan

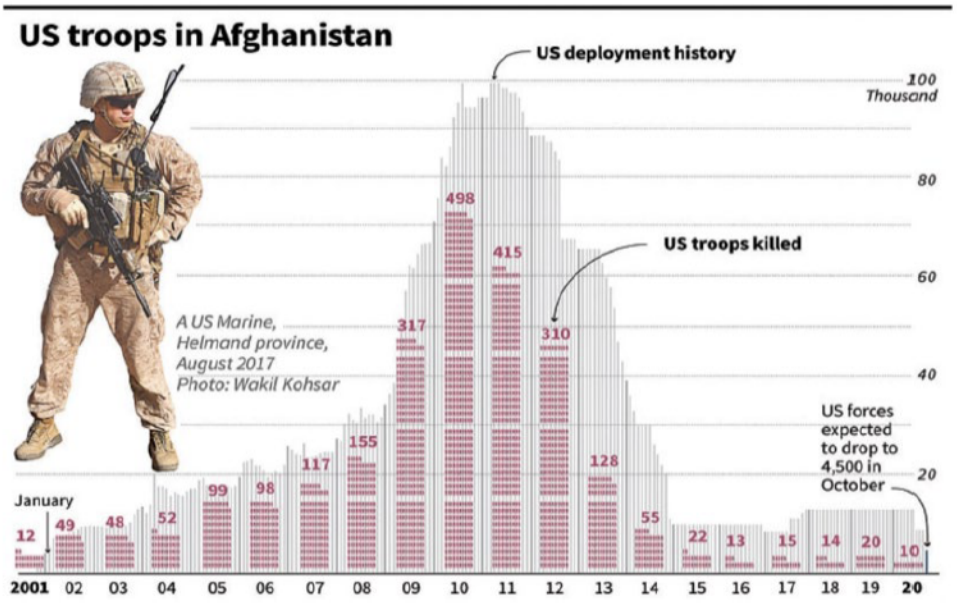


Figure 4 displays the US troops' commitment to Afghanistan in terms of time and casualties.[78]

[77] Bill Riggo, "Taliban Contest or Control Large Areas of Afghanistan," *FDD's Long War Journal*, December 2, 2009, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/12/taliban_contest_or_c.php.
[78] Anwar Iqbal, "All US Troops in Afghanistan Should Be Home by Christmas: Trump," *DAWN*, October 9, 2020, https://www.dawn.com/news/1584022.

Pakistan

Skepticism and mistrust are the hallmarks of US-Pakistan relations in the twenty-first century, leading to instances of cooperation and betrayal between the two states. The Bush administration considered Afghanistan and Pakistan (AFPAK) independent operational domains and relied on Pakistan's government and military forces to ensure that the AFPAK border and frontier areas remained free of militant havens.[79] However, the AFPAK border has continued to provide safe havens and freedom of movement to the Taliban, allowing militants to sustain their insurgency in Afghanistan with little interference from the Pakistani military (*Figure 5*).[80]

FIGURE 5: Taliban's Main Areas in AFPAK

***Figure 5 Pakistan areas that act as a haven for Taliban leadership and operations.*[81]**

To avoid becoming a target in the war on terror that erupted in the aftermath of 9/11, the Pakistani government claimed to support US counterterrorism efforts and the battle to depose the

[79] Wali Aslam, "Drones and the Issue of Continuity in America's Pakistani Policy under Obama," in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 140.
[80] Ashok Behuria, "Fighting the Taliban: Pakistan at War with Itself," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, 539; Elizabeth Arsenault and Tricia Bacon, "Disaggregating and Defeating Terrorist Safe Havens," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 2 (September 2014): 97.
[81] Ilyas Khan. "The Afghan-Pakistan Militant Nexus." *BBC News*. October 6, 2011. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-15149996.

Taliban and demolish the AQ infrastructure in Afghanistan. The Bush administration sought to assist states with limited capacity to combat terrorism by giving resources to guarantee that these states possessed the instruments necessary to carry out their commitment to combat terrorism.[82] Furthermore, the logistics needs for troop support forced the US to rely on Pakistani ports and land routes into Afghanistan to undertake operations (*Figure 6*).[83] Consequently, the US invested time and resources to set up a robust bilateral relationship with Pakistan that, on the surface, committed to the war on terrorism and fostering an open and tolerant society.[84] In response, the US supplied military and security aid to Pakistan to improve Pakistan's capabilities to deny the Taliban and AQ haven along the AFPAK border.

FIGURE 6: US Pakistan Supply Routes

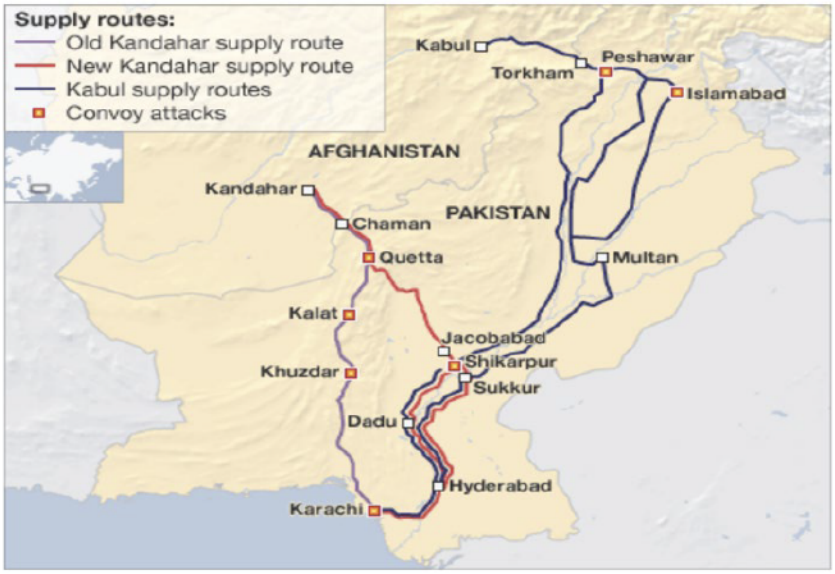


Figure 6 the US operations in Afghanistan rely on supply routes through Pakistan.[85]

The Bush administration launched the Border Security Program (BSP) in Pakistan in 2002. Between 2002 and 2011, BSP provided Pakistan with military aircraft, built 336

[82] "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," (2002), 6-7.
[83] Sabah Aslam, "The Afghan War: US Transit Reliance on Pakistan and Its Search for Alternatives," *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad* 31, no. 3 (2011): 156.
[84] *Ibid*., 10.
[85] Aslam, "The Afghan War," 158.

kilometers of border security roads, more than 200 border outposts, and provided $65 million in border security equipment.[86] Pakistan received an estimated $10.8 billion in US security-related foreign aid between 2002 and 2009 to cover the cost of operations along the AFPAK border.[87] In 2003, the US and Pakistan signed the US-Pakistan Trade and Investment Agreement, which resulted in the US being Pakistan's largest importer in 2010.[88] Nonetheless, the Taliban and other disruptive non-state actors have maintained a political, military, and economic presence in Pakistani provinces along the AFPAK border.

Following defeat in 2001, Taliban members fled to havens in Pakistan to strategize, conduct financial and logistical operations, and recruit and train fighters.[89] The Taliban leadership relocated to Quetta, Pakistan, under the authority of Mullah Mohammad Omar.[90] While hiding, the Taliban received funds from the global AQ network of contacts throughout the Muslim world to help organize an insurgency to regain power in Afghanistan.[91] Between 2002 and 2004, the Taliban restored their material base in Pakistan with donations from Pakistan and the Middle East and revenue from criminal activities.[92] By the end of 2005, the Taliban had reorganized and reintegrated forces across eastern and southern Afghanistan, bolstering insurgent operations against the GIRoA and the US-led coalition.[93]

---

[86] "Pakistan Border Security Program," US Department of State (US Department of State, November 23, 2011), https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/inl/rls/fs/177706.htm.
[87] Marvin Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency and Terrorism along Pakistan's North-West Frontier," *International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009), 76.
[88] Paul Miller, "How to Exercise US Leverage Over Pakistan," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): 40-42.
[89] Kersti Larsdotter, "Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents: Challenges for Counterinsurgency Theory and Doctrine," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (February 2014): 135.
[90] *Ibid*., 148.
[91] Seth Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study," vol. 4 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 62.
[92] Felbab-Brown, "Counterinsurgency, Counternarcotics, and Illicit Economies in Afghanistan: Lessons for State-Building," 192.
[93] Johnson, "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations," 11.

Without Pakistan as a haven, the Taliban would not have accumulated the financial, logistical, and recruitment assets needed to launch a full-scale insurgency in Afghanistan in 2006. Pakistan has allowed the Taliban to undertake legal and illegal financial activities, offered the Taliban leadership asylum, and provided clandestine logistical and military training support critical to the Taliban's survivability.[94] In 2009, a significant amount of opium entering Pakistan originated in Afghanistan's Helmand and Kandahar provinces, where the Taliban profited by protecting and taxing the flow of narcotics to the world market.[95] Along the AFPAK border, Taliban operational centers and havens facilitated convergence between the Taliban, organized criminal groups, global terrorist networks, and other militant groups, enabling the Taliban to transform into an insurgency criminal enterprise, adopt terrorist tactics, and eventually control much of the Afghan narcotics trade.

In 2009, the Obama administration refocused attention on the conflict that stretches across the porous AFPAK border, initiating a comprehensive assessment of America's strategy toward AFPAK and recognizing that security issues necessitated treating both states as a unified operational domain.[96] Diplomatically, the administration continued to provide military, border security, and civilian aid to Pakistan tied to caveats to address the flaws in Pakistan's civilian-military relations. [97] The Obama administration acknowledged the security connection between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the significance of a developing regional link between insurgents, terrorists, and criminals.

---

[94] Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study," 1; Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 119.
[95] The Global Afghan Opium Trade: A Threat Assessment, 2011 (Vienna: UNODC, 2011), 34.
[96] Aslam, "Drones and the Issue of Continuity in America's Pakistani Policy under Obama," 140.
[97] *Ibid*., 155.

Consequently, the US aggressively targeted havens and militant leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan using SOF, UAV strikes, and CIA-sponsored covert operations. [98] UAV strikes increased significantly during the Obama administration, with 280 strikes in Pakistan between January 2009 and October 2012 (*Table 2*).[99] From 2004 to 2012, each US UAV strike in Pakistan killed an average of 5.6 to 9.5 individuals.[100] President Obama authorized Joint Special Operations Command members to enter Abbottabad, Pakistan, surreptitiously on May 2, 2011, to perform a raid on a compound that ended in Osama bin Laden's death.[101] The Obama administration's employment of SOF and UAV strikes heightened tensions with Pakistan, allowing the Taliban to seize and destroy US equipment stranded in Pakistan port facilities and supply routes into Afghanistan.[102] Additionally, US drone operations strengthened the Taliban's recruiting base of fighters and suicide bombers, including women and children from families and communities devastated by US drone strikes.[103]

TABLE 1: US Drone Strikes in Pakistan

Table 1. Drone Missile Strikes in Pakistan*										
Year	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**
Strikes	1	1	3	5	35	53	117	64	46	28

Table 2 during the Obama administration, drone strikes in Pakistan rose significantly.[104]

[98] Larsdotter, "Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents," 152.
[99] Boyle, "The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare," 5.
[100] *Ibid*., 5.
[101] David Rohde, "The Obama Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, no. 192 (April 2012): 67.
[102] Aslam, "The Afghan War," 139
[103] *Ibid*., 144.
[104] Ryan Hendrickson, "Afghanistan, Drone Warfare, and the Kill List," in *Obama at War: Congress and the Imperial Presidency* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 30.

Iraq

The US spent most of 2002 focused on pursuing military intervention in Iraq rather than rebuilding Afghanistan.[105] The Bush administration framed Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein and his Ba'athist political party as an existential threat to national security, forming a pernicious link between transnational terrorist organizations and weapons of mass destruction. On March 20, 2003, the US invaded Iraq, and the breakdown of state institutions resulted in chaos, instigating religious and ethnic tensions throughout the region, culminating in high levels of violence and instability across Iraq.[106] At this juncture, despite the United Nations and the GIRoA calls to expand security coverage throughout the country, the US strategy in Afghanistan was to dedicate as few financial and military resources as possible to post-conflict stability and reconstruction (*Figure 7 and 8*).[107] As the unrest in Iraq spiraled out of control, culminating in the formation of sectarian militants and Islamist terrorists comprised of Iraqis and foreigners, the US further neglected Afghanistan.

In Iraq, the three-week campaign to depose Saddam morphed into a violent and complex seven-year conflict marked by prolonged resistance to US forces, sectarian carnage, and the development of Iranian-backed Shiite militias and AQ in Iraq.[108] Throughout the Bush administration, the highly volatile situation in Iraq necessitated the continuous deployment of over 100,000 US troops and accelerated US funding for Operation Iraqi Freedom. (*Figure 7 and 8)*. As a result of the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombings by terrorists in Iraq and the resumption of Taliban activities in Afghanistan, the Bush administration

---

[105] James Dobbins, "The Costs of Overreaction," in *The Long Shadow of 9/11: America's Response to Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011), 16.
[106] *Ibid.*, 17.
[107] *Ibid.*, 17.
[108] Paul Rogers, "The 'War on Terror' and International Security," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 22 (2011): 20.

embraced nation-building by directing stabilization operations as a critical task of the US military.[109]

Evidence suggests that militants fighting US coalition forces in Iraq traveled to Taliban havens in Pakistan to share lessons learned to assist the Taliban in their insurrection in Afghanistan. In 2005, Iraqi Islamist leaders met with the Taliban in Pakistan and imparted knowledge gained from fighting against the US in Iraq.[110] At this point, Iraqi militants convinced and transferred tactics and technical knowledge on the use and effectiveness of suicide attacks and IEDs.[111] In 2005, a reported 25 suicide attacks occurred; in 2006, reported suicide attacks increased to 139, and by 2007, the reported use of suicide bombers increased to 160 (*Figure 9*).[112] The use of IEDs as an effective tactic by the Taliban became noticeable in 2006 when fatalities in Afghanistan from IEDs began to increase significantly as the insurgency gained momentum (*Figure 10).*[113] By 2008, the Taliban had mastered the method of using IEDs against ANSF and US-led forces and customized deployment techniques according to specific tactics and equipment specifications to maximize casualties.[114] The Taliban adoption and innovation of terrorist tactics and techniques used by Iraqi militants enhanced the group's ability to attack and undermine GIRoA and the US-led coalition.

In 2009, when President Obama took office, he proposed to reduce US military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Obama administration began a large-scale withdrawal of troops from Iraq in 2010 and transferred American resources to Afghanistan

[109] Dobbins, "The Costs of Overreaction," 18.
[110] Hassan Abbas, "Setting the Stage for the Taliban Revival in Afghanistan," in *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 117.
[111] Johnson, "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations," 10.
[112] Abbas, "Setting the Stage for the Taliban Revival in Afghanistan," 117.
[113] Johnson, "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations," 13.
[114] *Ibid*., 13.

(*Figure 7 and 8*).[115] As the US involvement in Iraq started to decline, the US significantly increased troop and funding levels in Afghanistan to counter the Taliban and establish security and stability in preparation for transferring responsibility to the GIRoA and the ANSF. When the US shifted resources from Iraq to address AFPAKs security and stability concerns, the Taliban established a complex network of financial, political, and military support to withstand and exploit changing US behaviors and regional conditions.

FIGURE 7: Boots on Ground Iraq and Afghanistan 2001-2017

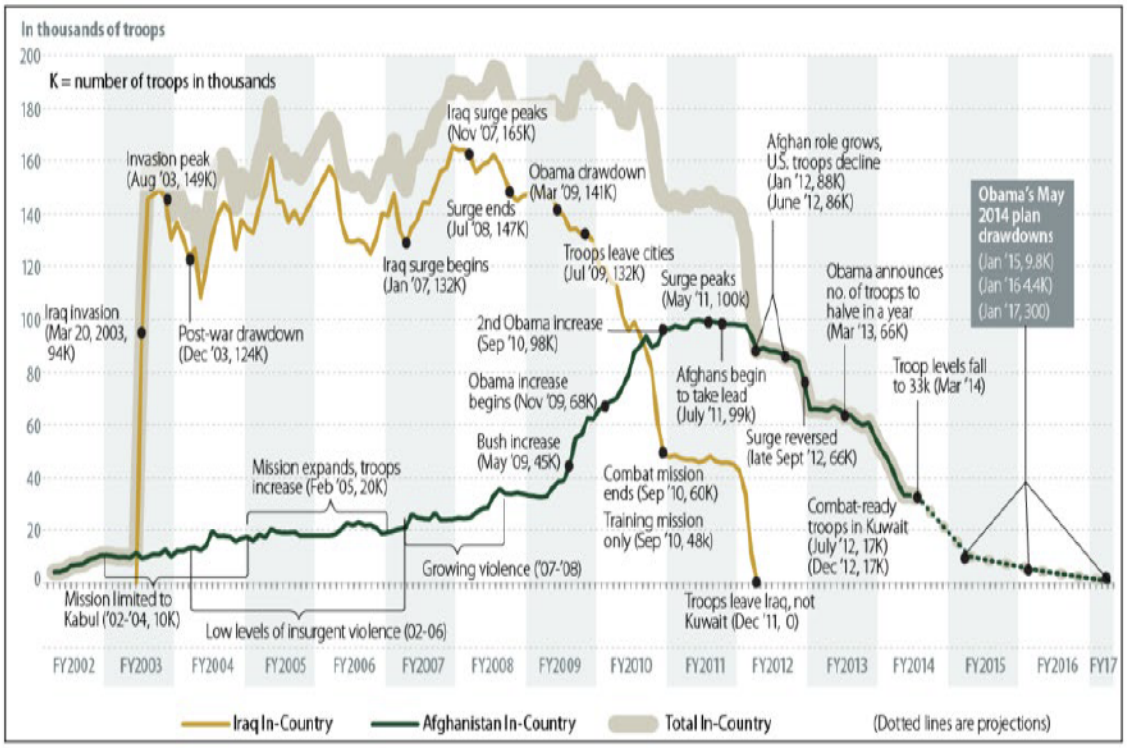
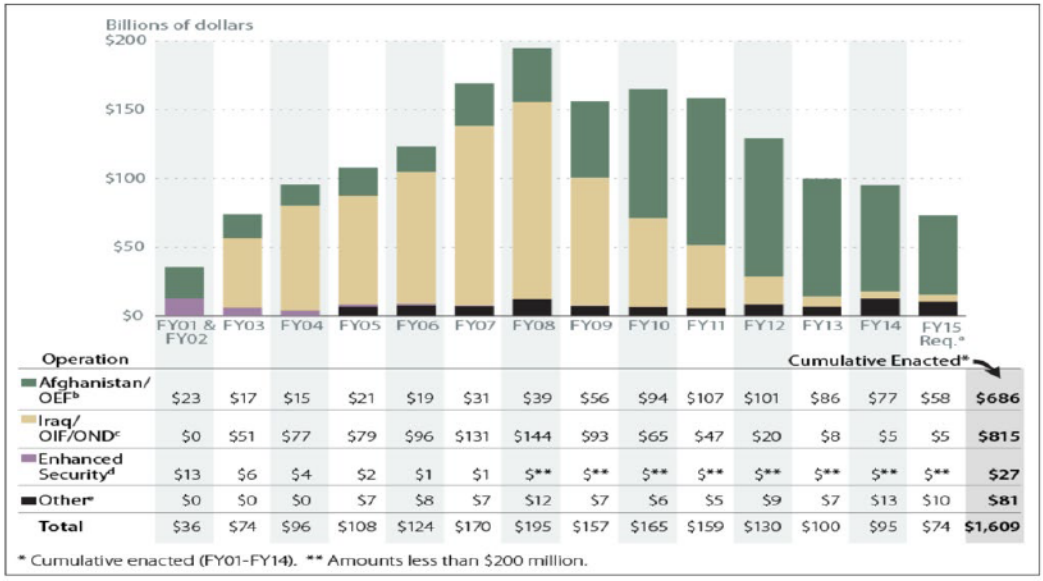


Figure 7 US troops on the ground in Iraq versus Afghanistan.[116]

[115] Rogers, "The 'War on Terror' and International Security," 21; Anthony Cordesman, "Failure in Two Past Administrations" (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017), https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23158.3.
[116] Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11" (Congressional Research Service, 2014), 9.

FIGURE 8: Estimated War Funding by Operation 2001-2015



Operation	FY01 & FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15 Req.*	Cumulative Enacted*
Afghanistan/ OEF[b]	$23	$17	$15	$21	$19	$31	$39	$56	$94	$107	$101	$86	$77	$58	**$686**
Iraq/ OIF/OND[c]	$0	$51	$77	$79	$96	$131	$144	$93	$65	$47	$20	$8	$5	$5	**$815**
Enhanced Security[d]	$13	$6	$4	$2	$1	$1	$**	$**	$**	$**	$**	$**	$**	$**	**$27**
Other[e]	$0	$0	$0	$7	$8	$7	$12	$7	$6	$5	$9	$7	$13	$10	**$81**
Total	$36	$74	$96	$108	$124	$170	$195	$157	$165	$159	$130	$100	$95	$74	**$1,609**

* Cumulative enacted (FY01-FY14). ** Amounts less than $200 million.

Figure 8 illustrates the disparity between the amount of US treasure allocated to Iraq and Afghanistan.[117]

Figure 9: Afghanistan Suicide Attacks, 2001-2011

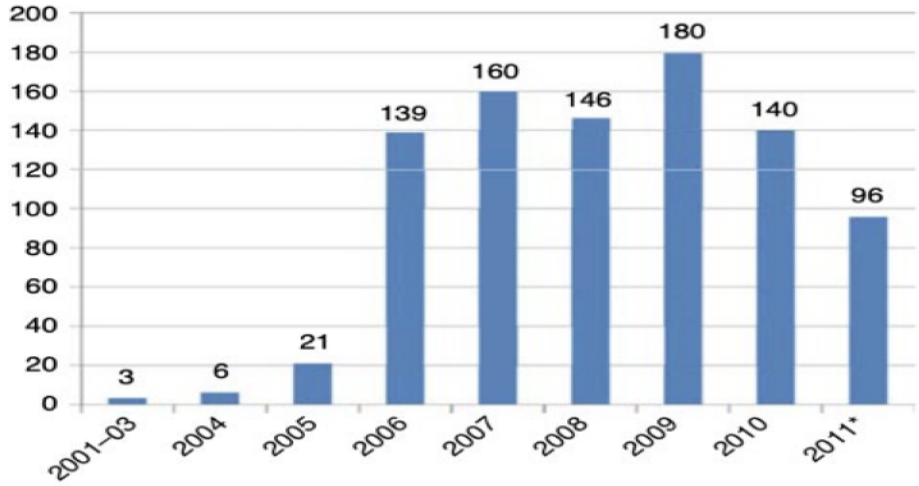


Figure 9 suicide attacks in Afghanistan increased in frequency as their effectiveness in Iraq was revealed.[118]

[117] *Ibid.*, 15.
[118] Johnson, "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations," 19.

Figure 10: IED Fatalities in Afghanistan, 2001-2011

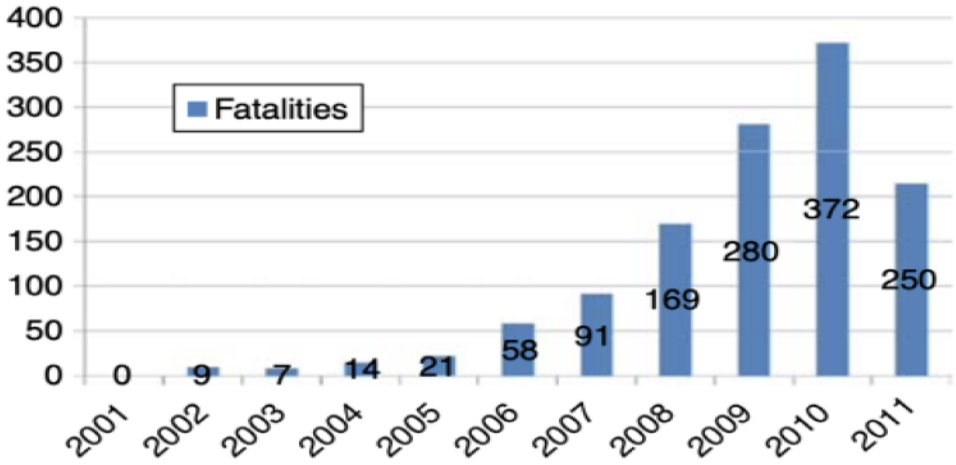


Figure 10 IED strikes in Afghanistan grew as their effectiveness in Iraq was demonstrated.[119]

Iran

During the moderate Khatami presidency, Ayatollah Khamenei had not yet solidified his authority of Iran, and Khatami attempted to reintegrate Iran into the international community, which necessitated a better relationship with the US.[120] Throughout the 1990s, Iran was a significant supporter of the Northern Alliance fighting against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Iran assisted in connecting the US CIA and SOF with the Northern Alliance in 2001.[121] As the US military campaign in Afghanistan began, US officials secretly met with Iranian diplomats, during which the Iranians assisted the US in building the transitional Afghan government at the December 2001 Bonn Conference.[122]

Despite Iran's vital assistance to the US in Afghanistan, the Bush administration was

[119] *Ibid*., 19.
[120] Parsi, "Khatami's Détente," Kindle 3117-3119
[121] *Ibid*., Kindle 3117-3119.
[122] *Ibid*., Kindle 3139-3146; Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Background and US Policy" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 22.

uninterested in a larger strategic opening with Iran, focusing on Iran's behavior toward Israel.[123] Bush referred to Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as the "Axis of Evil" in his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, willfully blind to Iran's efforts at détente by assisting the US in Afghanistan.[124] Although the US designated Iran as a member of the axis of evil, Khatami continued to try normalized relations with the US and offered Iranian support to the US campaign to overthrow Saddam in Iraq.[125] Succeeding the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Iranians offered the US a grand bargain proposal (based on fear of a US invasion of Iran) approved by Supreme Leader Khamenei and included all concessions sought by the US. However, Cheney and Rumsfeld quickly dismissed the proposal without giving it proper consideration.[126] The US had adopted a regime change policy toward Iran after the fall of Saddam, increasing Iranian hardliner's aversion to diplomatic dialogue with the US.[127]

Since 2008, the US and GIRoA have gathered evidence that the Quds Force (Iranian special forces) branch of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has provided weaponry, training, and financial support to the Taliban.[128] According to the reports, the Quds Force dispatched weapons to Kandahar, Afghanistan, to expand Iranian influence.[129] The US Treasury Department accuses Iran of supplying the Taliban "with small arms and ammunition, RPGs, mortar rounds, 107mm rockets, plastic explosives, and most likely MANPADs."[130] The State Department's 2010 report on international terrorism charged the Quds Force with training

---

[123] *Ibid*., Kindle 3191-3192.
[124] *Ibid*., Kindle 3249-3250.
[125] *Ibid*., Kindle 3249-3250.
[126] *Ibid*., Kindle 3425-3426.
[127] Alireza Nader, Ali Scotten, Ahmad Rahmani, Robert Stewart, and Leila Mahnad, "Iran and Afghanistan: A Complicated Relationship," in *Iran's Influence in Afghanistan: Implications for the US Drawdown* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014), 10.
[128] Frederick Kagan, Ahmad Majidyar, and Marisa Sullivan, "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan," *Institute for the Study of War*, 2012, 79.
[129] *Ibid*., 82.
[130] Clarke, "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers," 119.

the Taliban in small unit tactics, assault rifles, explosives, and indirect fire weapon systems.[131] However, Iran's support for the Taliban is significantly less than it is for Shiite militants in Iraq, and the Taliban's military and intelligence ties with Iran are weaker than those with Hezbollah.[132]

Despite the historical differences between Tehran and the Taliban, the Iranian government has continued to support and officially recognize the Taliban as a political party to undermine the US efforts in Afghanistan. Iran had maintained diplomatic relations with the Taliban since at least 2012 when Iran allowed high-level Taliban members to visit Iran and permitted a Taliban office in Tehran.[133] President Obama took office intent to negotiate with Iran, culminating in the 2015 P5+1 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iranian nuclear deal.[134] Despite the Obama administration's diplomatic accomplishments with Iran, the IRGC-Quds forces have continued nefarious regional activities to undermine US interests and expand the Iranian sphere of influence throughout the Middle East and South Asia.

Analysis of Data

The data shows common patterns across US interactions with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran. Common patterns are the US security responses to 9/11, approaches to the Afghan narcotics trade, nation-building assumptions, and the management of COIN. Discrete stages in US behavior patterns have caused, contributed to, or maintained regional environmental and structural conditions that have resulted in Taliban behavior consistent with criminal, insurgent,

[131] Kagan *et al*., "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan," 82.
[132] Nader *et al*., "Iran and Afghanistan: A Complicated Relationship," 14.
[133] Thomas, "Afghanistan: Background and US Policy," 22.
[134] *Ibid*., 52.

and terrorist groups. When contrasted to pre-2001 Taliban behavior, the data demonstrates significant changes and enduring traits in the Taliban's behavior following 9/11.

US Security Responses to 9/11

Before 2001, the Taliban repressed criminal activities in Afghanistan. After fleeing Afghanistan, the Taliban rebuilt in preparation for an insurgency, relying on previously condemned criminal activities to finance the group's revival. With safe havens in Pakistan and a fragmented Afghanistan devoid of functioning government, the Taliban were free to exploit the thriving AFPAK shadow economy, resulting in collaboration with criminal groups, the development of illicit logistical links, and the establishment of support enclaves in Afghanistan. The instability in Iraq and the escalation of sectarian and ethnic tensions in the region have allowed the Taliban to regain control of Afghan territory with little resistance. With the support of Iraqi militants, the Taliban adopted the use of suicide bombings and IEDs, which led to the establishment of an insurgent-terrorist nexus. Before the US invasion of Iraq, the Taliban never used suicide bombings as a tactic and lacked the technical skills to use IEDs effectively. After failed Iranian attempts to ease tensions with the US, Iran and the Taliban, once adversaries, would eventually establish diplomatic and military links to undermine the US.

The data discussion supports an almost certain causal relationship between US security responses to 9/11 and changing conditions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. By contrast, a probable causal relationship exists between the US security response to 9/11 and Pakistan, as demonstrated by data establishing a precedent for specific Pakistani conditions conducive to the Taliban. The data analysis reveals multiple instances in which the US security responses to 9/11 resulted in significant changes in conditions, leading the Taliban to undertake criminal and terrorist activities previously uncharacteristic of the group before 2001.

US Approaches to Afghan Narcotics Trade

In the 1990s, the Taliban viewed the Afghan opium trade as un-Islamic but learned to tolerate, promote, and tax the industry due to popular Pashtun support for the illicit industry. With no state mechanisms to control opium cultivation and the expansion of the Afghan opium network, the Taliban gradually took historical roles in the opium trade through taxation and protection. Eradication initiatives increased the demand for the Taliban to protect opium fields, supplies, and trafficking operations into Pakistan, enabling the group to further integrate into the narcotics trafficking network while gaining support from local Afghan communities dependent on the cultivation of opium. Interdiction initiatives provided the Taliban with opportunities to fill voids created by removing prominent Afghan traffickers and consolidating the group's control over large portions of the Afghan opium economy. The Taliban's convergence with transnational traffickers, and the laundering of illicit revenues through legitimate business platforms, resulted in Taliban behaviors resembling an organized crime syndicate.

The data discussion supports an almost certain causal relationship between the US approaches to the Afghan narcotics trade and changing conditions in Afghanistan. In comparison, evidence reveals only a possible causal relationship between changing conditions in Pakistan, owing to a lack of data collected on Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan narcotics trade. The data analysis demonstrates that changes in the US approach to narcotics in Afghanistan resulted in significant changes in Afghanistan's conditions, causing the Taliban to assume historical roles, ally with criminal organizations, and integrate into the opium trade, eventually gaining control of a sizable portion of Afghan opium cultivation, processing, and trafficking.

US Nation-Building Assumptions

A thriving Pakistan haven with few impediments from the Pakistani government, which benefited from claiming support for US regional objectives, enabled the Taliban to evolve into an insurgency criminal enterprise. The Taliban leadership exploited the insecurity and instability in Afghanistan by establishing a shadow government throughout Afghanistan with historical Taliban Islamist rhetoric, Pashtun customs, and governmental functions. The destabilization of Iraq ensured conditions for the Taliban to grow as a criminal enterprise to support a protracted insurgency and led to the Taliban adopting suicide bombings and techniques in manufacturing and deploying IEDs. The Taliban's effective use of IEDs and suicide bombings to achieve the groups' objectives was not observed until after the US invasion of Iraq. Tensions between the US and other states in the region allowed the Taliban to benefit from both overt and covert support from Pakistan, a historical supporter, and Iran, a historical enemy.

The assumptions in US nation-building in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq reveal an almost certain causal relationship with specific essential changes in conditions. Due to the significant time gaps between US behavior toward Iran and essential changes in conditions. The data analysis demonstrates that US behaviors linked with nation-building assumptions, such as American exceptionalism and Americanization, resulted in critical changes in conditions that prompted the Taliban to adopt new criminal, insurgent, and terrorist behaviors.

US Management of Counterinsurgency

The Taliban exploited the US-led coalition's indiscriminate bombing by attacking security forces and disguising themselves in villages and homes of innocent civilians to provoke US actions that resulted in civilian deaths and property damage, prompting enraged Afghans to seek vengeance. As a result of US aerial bombings along the AFPAK border, the Taliban

benefited from increased access to recruits for the group's militant wing and individuals willing to become suicide bombings. As the US pursued a population-centric strategy in Afghanistan, the Taliban followed suit by issuing a similar directive to increase population support. As the US increased troop levels in Afghanistan, the Taliban returned to their sanctuaries, adopted new tactics and technological advances, and engaged in guerrilla warfare and terrorism to wear down the ANSF, US-led coalition, and instill fear in Afghans who opposed the Taliban objectives. As the US reduced COIN operations in Afghanistan, the Taliban moved quickly to regain territories across Afghanistan.

The US management of COIN displays an almost certain causal relationship to changing conditions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. In comparison, the data collected on Iran lacks content to support a judgment on a causal link to US management of COIN and changing conditions in Iran. The data analysis reveals that conditions changed due to the US management of COIN in Afghanistan and Iraq, leading to adjustments in the Taliban's behavior to continue surviving and thriving to control territory and resources in Afghanistan. US behavior in Pakistan fostered the growth of the Taliban. However, such conditions are not uncommon in Pakistan throughout history.

Hypothesis Evaluation

The Afghanistan case represented a causal relationship between US behaviors and changes in the character of the Taliban. Analysis of changes in environmental and structural conditions in Afghanistan caused by specific US behaviors demonstrated a causal relationship between changing conditions and Taliban behaviors that would not have occurred otherwise. The Pakistan case study demonstrated US behaviors that did not lead to changing conditions but instead enabled conditions critical for the adaption and survival of the Taliban. Analysis of

specific US behaviors and conditions in Pakistan identified the state as the cornerstone of the Taliban's ability to adapt to changing conditions. The Iraq case demonstrated errors in the early US behavior after 9/11 that led to critical changes in conditions that caused the Taliban to adopt new behaviors. The analysis demonstrates a causal relationship between US neglect of Afghanistan and conditions that enabled the Taliban to rebuild and reorganize. In addition, a probable causal relationship exists between changing conditions in Iraq and the Taliban's adoption of terrorist tactics and effective guerrilla warfare techniques. The Iran case presents interesting explanatory evidence to changing regional conditions concerning US behaviors. However, analysis demonstrates a striking correlation to Iran and the Taliban's transformation into an insurgency criminal enterprise that uses terrorism as a tactic but lacks the substance to support the hypothesis alone adequately.

Conclusion

US interventions in South Asia and the Middle East since 9/11 have led to substantial changes to environmental and structural conditions that disrupted nefarious non-state actor threats to national security in the short term. However, the long-term effects of US-induced regional changes have proliferated the root causes that fueled the support base for Islamist groups and facilitated the conditions that caused the blurring of distinctions between disruptive non-state actors. US behaviors since 9/11 have created conditions that caused the Taliban to change behaviors that blurred the original characteristics of the group, ultimately strengthening the Taliban's position.

After liberating Afghanistan from the Taliban in 2001, the Bush administration turned attention to Iraq and other perceived rogue states accused of aiding and harboring terrorists and pursuing a nuclear arsenal. The US failed to acknowledge Iranian's contributions to the US

efforts in both Afghanistan and Iraq and emboldened the hardliners under Ayatollah Khamenei to push the moderates out of power and consolidate their control over Iran, resulting in increased investment in Iran's asymmetric capabilities, missile defense program, and nuclear technology. Between 2003 and 2008, US commitments in Iraq continued to result in the neglect of the situation in Afghanistan, which provided the Taliban the freedom to integrate into criminal activities, build up political and military components for an insurrection in Afghanistan, and adopt terrorist tactics to undermine the GIRoA and ANSF supported by the US-led coalition. Surrounded to the east and west by the US military and the collapse of regional balances after the fall of Saddam, Iranian hardliners maneuvered through asymmetric means to attack American interests and expand Iranian influence across the region, including supporting the Taliban.

Each change in the US behavior in Afghanistan resulted in shifting environmental and structural conditions that provided an opportunity for the Taliban to adapt, connect, converge, and transform to survive and thrive. At the same time, the US failed to adapt initiatives promptly to prevent the Taliban's survival. In addition, the US failed from the beginning to fully comprehend and address the fact that Afghanistan's security and stability have remained intertwined with Pakistan, and US measures toward Pakistan have never yielded many long-term outcomes to address Pakistan's role in the transformation and survival of the Taliban.

Critical mistakes appear among the uniting principles of US behavior in and around Afghanistan that led to conditions that drove the Taliban's behavioral changes. Persistently, US policymakers neglected to accurately comprehend existing micro-level and macro-level conditions to inform US interventions and consider second and third-order effects. The initial 9/11 responses of the US in South Asia and the Middle East established the problematic foundation, which transcends beyond the problem in Afghanistan. First, the US made a

catastrophic mistake by invading Iraq. Instead, the US should have focused on stabilizing Afghanistan and adequately acknowledging and aggressively addressing the link between Pakistan and disruptive non-state actors. Second, the US should have eased tensions with Iran, accepted the Iranian grand-bargain, and worked with Iran to contain the perceived threat posed by Saddam in Iraq. Finally, the US should have moved to turn the Afghan opium industry into a legal business that supplied American pharmaceutical companies while countering the illicit flow of narcotics out of Afghanistan.

Bibliography

Abbas, Hassan. "Setting the Stage for the Taliban Revival in Afghanistan." Essay. In *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*, 94–120. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Arsenault, Elizabeth Grimm, and Tricia Bacon. "Disaggregating and Defeating Terrorist Safe Havens." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 2 (2014): 85–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2014.977605.

Aslam, Sabah. "The Afghan War: US Transit Reliance on Pakistan and Its Search for Alternatives." *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad* 31, no. 3 (2011): 153–69.

Aslam, Wali. "Drones and the Issue of Continuity in America's Pakistani Policy under Obama." Essay. In *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, 139–61. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Barker, Alec. "Improvised Explosive Devices in Southern Afghanistan and Western Pakistan, 2002–2009." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 8 (2011): 600–620.

Behuria, Ashok K. "Fighting the Taliban: Pakistan at War with Itself." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 4 (2007): 529–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710701684963.

Belasco, Amy. Rep. *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*. Congressional Research Service, 2014.

Biddle, Stephen. "Afghanistan's Legacy: Emerging Lessons of an Ongoing War." *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2014): 73–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2014.926210.

Boyle, Micheal J. "The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare." *International Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2013): 1–29.

Bunker, Robert J. "Old and New Insurgency Forms," 2016. http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep11556. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

CIA. "Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency [2012]." Homeland Security Digital Library. United States. Central Intelligence Agency, January 1, 2012. https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=713599.

Clarke, Colin P. "Afghan Taliban: From Strugglers to Smugglers." Essay. In *Terrorism, Inc: the Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare*, 113–32. Santa Barbara , CA: Praeger, 2015.

Cordesman, Anthony H. "Afghan Narcotics: 2000-2018: From Control and Elimination Efforts to a Drug Economy and Bombing Labs." Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 23, 2018. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep22464.

Cordesman, Anthony. Rep. *Failure in Two Past Administrations*. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23158.3.

Coyne, Christopher J., Abigail R. Hall, and Scott Burns. "The War on Drugs in Afghanistan: Another Failed Experiment with Interdiction." *The Independent Review* 21, no. 1 (2016): 95–119.

Dishman, Chris. "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (2001): 43–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100118878.

Dobbins, James. "The Costs of Overreaction." Essay. In *The Long Shadow of 9/11: America's Response to Terrorism*, 15–21. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011.

"Examining the Nexus between Organised Crime and Terrorism and Its Implications for EU Programming." ICCT, April 13, 2017. https://icct.nl/publication/examining-the-nexus-between-organised-crime-and-terrorism-and-its-implications-for-eu-programming/.

Felbab-Brown, Vanda, Harold Trinkunas, and Shadi Hamid. "Second Wind: Taliban Coercion and Governance in Afghanistan." Essay. In *Militants, Criminals and Warlords the Challenge of Local Governance in an Age of Disorder*, 33–55. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018.

Felbab-Brown, Vanda. "Counterinsurgency, Counternarcotics, and Illicit Economies in Afghanistan: Lessons for State-Building." Essay. In *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization*, 189–209. Washington, DC: Published for the Center for Complex Operations, Institute for National Strategic Studies by National Defense University Press, 2013.

The Global Afghan Opium Trade: a Threat Assessment, 2011. Vienna: UNODC, 2011.

Grenier, Stephen M. "United States: Examining America's Longest War." Essay. In *Coalition Challenges in Afghanistan: the Politics of Alliance*, 47–64. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.

Hammes, Thomas X. "Characteristics of Fourth-Generation War." Essay. In *The Sling and the Stone: on War in the 21st century*, 207–23. St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006.

Hendrickson, Ryan C. "Afghanistan, Drone Warfare, and the Kill List." Essay. In *Obama at War: Congress and the Imperial Presidency*, 25–38. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015.

Hooker, Richard D. "A Century Like No Other." Essay. In *The Grand Strategy of the United States*, 4–12. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2014.

Iqbal, Anwar. "All US Troops in Afghanistan Should Be Home by Christmas: Trump." DAWN, October 9, 2020. https://www.dawn.com/news/1584022.

Johnson, Thomas H. "Taliban Adaptations and Innovations." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 1 (2013): 3–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2013.740228.

Jones, Seth G. Rep. *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study* 4. Vol. 4. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008.

Kagan, Frederick, Ahmad Majidyar, and Marisa Sullivan. "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan." *Institute for the Study of War*, 2012.

Khan, Ilyas. "The Afghan-Pakistan Militant Nexus." BBC News. BBC, October 6, 2011. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-15149996.

Kydd, Andrew H, and Barbara F Walter. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 49–80.

Larsdotter, Kersti. "Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents: Challenges for Counterinsurgency Theory and Doctrine." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014): 135–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.878656.

Lea, John, and Kevin Stenson. "Security, Sovereignty, and Non-State Governance 'From Below.'" *Canadian journal of law and society* 22, no. 2 (2007): 9–27. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0829320100009339.

Makarenko, Tamara. "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism." *Global Crime* 6, no. 1 (February 2004): 129–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/1744057042000297025.

Maloney, Sean M. "A Violent Impediment: the Evolution of Insurgent Operations in Kandahar Province 2003–07." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 2 (2008): 201–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310802061364.

Mandel, Robert. "Links Between Transnational Criminals and Terrorists." Essay. In *Dark Logic: Transnational Criminal Tactics and Global Security*, 145–61. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020.

Mason, Jeff, and Jonathan Landay. "Obama, in Shift, Says He Will Keep 8,400 US Troops in Afghanistan until 2017." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, July 6, 2016. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-idUSKCN0ZM1HT.

Metz, Steven. “The Future of Insurgency,” December 10, 1993. http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep11412. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

Miller, Paul D. "How to Exercise US Leverage Over Pakistan." *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2012.725022.

Nader, Alireza, Ali G. Scotten, Ahmad Idrees Rahmani, Robert Stewart, and Leila Mahnad. “Iran and Afghanistan: A Complicated Relationship.” Essay. In *Iran's Influence in Afghanistan: Implications for the US Drawdown*, 5–22. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014.

“National Security Strategy 2010.” National Security Strategy Archive, May 2010. https://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2010/.

“The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, September 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/.

Oehme, Chester G. “Terrorists, Insurgents, and Criminals—Growing Nexus?” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 1 (2008): 80–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701767130.

“Organized Crime.” FBI, May 3, 2016. https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/organized-crime.

"Pakistan Border Security Program." US Department of State. US Department of State, November 23, 2011. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/inl/rls/fs/177706.htm.

Parsi, Trita. “Khatami's Détente.” Essay. In *Treacherous Alliance: the Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Peters, Gretchen, and Don Rassler. *Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan*. West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2010.

Riggo, Bill. “Taliban Contest or Control Large Areas of Afghanistan.” FDD's Long War Journal, December 2, 2009. https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/12/taliban_contest_or_c.php.

Robb, John. “Guerrilla Entrepreneurs.” Essay. In *Brave New War: the next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization*, 133–51. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008.

Rogers, Paul. “The 'War on Terror' and International Security.” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 22 (2011): 15–23.

Rohde, David. “The Obama Doctrine.” *Foreign Policy*, no. 192 (April 2012): 64–69.

Rosenthal, Justine A. "For-Profit Terrorism: The Rise of Armed Entrepreneurs." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 481–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802064858.

Sanderson, Thomas M. "Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines." *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2004): 49–61. https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2004.0020.

Schmidt, Farhana. "From Islamic Warriors to Drug Lords: The Evolution of the Taliban Insurgency." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2010): 61–77. https://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-2010-005.

Semple, Michael. Rep. *Rhetoric, Ideology, and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement* 102. Vol. 102. Washington, DC: the United States Institute of Peace, 2014.

Shelley, Louise I. "The Nexus of Organized International Criminals and Terrorism." *International Annals of Criminology*, 2, 40, no. 1 (2002): 85–92.

Shelley, Louise I., and John T. Picarelli. "Methods and Motives: Exploring Links between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism." *Trends in Organized Crime* 9, no. 2 (2005): 52–67. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-005-1024-x.

Souleimanov, Emil Aslan, and Huseyn Aliyev. "Blood Revenge and Violent Mobilization: Evidence from the Chechen Wars." *International Security* 40, no. 2 (2015): 158–80. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00219.

Sullivan, John P., and Robert J. Bunker. "Rethinking Insurgency: Criminality, Spirituality, and Societal Warfare in the Americas." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 5 (November 28, 2011): 742–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.625720.

Tellis, Ashely, and Jeff Eggers. "US Policy in Afghanistan: Changing Strategies, Preserving Gains." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2017. https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/22/u.s.-policy-in-afghanistan-changing-strategies-preserving-gains-pub-70027.

Thachuk, Kimberley L. "The Gangsterization of Terrorism." Essay. In *Terrorist Criminal Enterprises: Financing Terrorism through Organized Crime*, 11–26. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2018.

Thomas, Clayton. Rep. *Afghanistan: Background and US Policy*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2019.

"A Timeline of U.S. Troop Levels in Afghanistan since 2001." Military Times. Military Times, August 8, 2017. https://www.militarytimes.com/news -military/2016/07/06/a-timeline-of-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-since-2001/.

"United States Code, 2011 Edition Title 22 - FOREIGN RELATIONS AND INTERCOURSE." US Government Publishing Office, 2011. www.gpo.gov.

Weinbaum, Marvin. "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency and Terrorism along Pakistan's North-West Frontier." *International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009).

Whitlock, Craig, and Nick Kirkpatrik. "The War in Afghanistan: America's Longest Conflict in Photos." The Washington Post. WP Company, April 14, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/afghanistan-war-photos/.

Zambernardi, Lorenzo. "Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma." *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2010): 21–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2010.492722.

———. "Betrayal in Afghanistan." Essay. In *Treacherous Alliances: the Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Curriculum Vitae

Since 2016, I have worked as a contracted military consultant for the Presidential Guard of the United Arab Emirates. Prior to working as a contractor, I spent fourteen years in the US Army Special Operations, including nine deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. I attended numerous military training courses and graduated from American Military University with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations.